

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama to Participate in Summit with European Union

Obama looks forward to opportunity to meet again with EU partners

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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President Obama's Participation in Summit with European Union

President Obama will participate in a Summit with the leaders of the European Union, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso, in Lisbon, Portugal, on November 20, 2010.

The United States has no stronger partner than Europe in advancing security and prosperity around the world. The United States and the European Union are continually working together to advance a broad agenda based on a common history, shared values, and enduring ties. Our economic relationship is vital to global prosperity, and we are committed to cooperating to promote strong and sustained growth in our economies. We are united in our effort to protect our people and promote global security by combating terrorism and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Together we advance the ideals of democracy and human rights that are essential in free societies.

The President looks forward to this opportunity to meet again with EU partners, to reaffirm our transatlantic agenda, and to advance our cooperation on issues of mutual concern.

Country Leadership Critical in Global Health Effort, Secretary Clinton Says

Initiative will increase funding, efficiency to save lives around globe

By Cheryl Pellerin

Science Writer

Washington — In a realignment of global health funding intended to strengthen country engagement and national health systems rather than to fight illness disease by disease, the United States is working around the world to implement the Obama administration's new Global Health Initiative (GHI).

Through the initiative, the United States is investing \$63 billion over six years to help partner countries build on the success of their efforts to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis to bolster the health of women, newborns and children.

In a time of economic instability for all nations, GHI aims to maximize the sustainable health impact the United States achieves for every dollar invested.

"The United States is investing \$63 billion," Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in an August 16 speech at Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, "first to sustain and strengthen our existing health programs and second to build upon those programs and take their work to the next level by collaborating with governments, organizations, civil society groups and individuals."

"We're shifting our focus from solving problems one at a time to serving people," she said, "by considering more fully the circumstances of their lives and ensuring they can get the care they need most over the course of their lifetimes."

Up to 20 countries, called GHI Plus countries, will receive technical and management resources that will help them quickly implement innovative health solutions under the initiative and pass these on to other nations. The first eight — Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nepal and Rwanda — have been chosen and work has begun.

"We will not be successful in our efforts to end deaths from AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis," President Obama said in May 2009 as he unveiled the initiative, "unless we do more to improve health systems around the world, focus our efforts on child and maternal health and ensure that best practices drive funding for these programs."

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

The initiative's efforts focus on building stronger and sustainable health systems; improving metrics, monitoring and evaluation; promoting research and innovation; and strengthening and leveraging multilateral organizations, global health partnerships and private-sector engagement.

"We are taking the investments our country has made in PEPFAR [the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief], the President's Malaria Initiative, maternal and child health, family planning, neglected tropical diseases and other critical health areas, building on the work of agencies across the federal government such as the Centers for Disease Control, and expanding their reach by improving the overall environment in which health services are delivered," Clinton said.

Through GHI, goals include:

- Maternal Health: Save 360,000 women's lives by reducing maternal mortality by 30 percent across assisted

countries.

- Child Health: Save 3 million children's lives, including 1.5 million newborns, by reducing mortality rates for children under age 5 by 35 percent across assisted countries.
- Family Planning: Prevent 54 million unintended pregnancies by meeting the need for modern contraception. Contraceptive prevalence is expected to rise to 35 percent across assisted countries, reflecting an average 2 percent increase annually. First births by women under 18 should decline to 20 percent.

"The GHI aims for greater resources and a fresh approach to deploying resources in order to maximize health outcomes in as short a time as possible," Microsoft Chairman and philanthropist Bill Gates said March 10 in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

"It seeks to concentrate resources in order to better achieve scale in selected countries," he said. "And it utilizes targeted funding increases on diseases and conditions that have a devastating health and economic impact on countries, yet are entirely preventable or treatable. These are laudable goals."

"I'm very optimistic about the Global Health Initiative," Clinton said, "about what it can mean in terms of results but what it can also represent as a new model of how we better present ourselves to the world, how we are more cost-effective and efficient in delivering services, and where the United States leads by our values, and people can see what that means to them."

Pentagon Report Analyzes China's Military

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — China began a new phase of military development earlier in this decade that expanded the role of its armed forces beyond its immediate security needs into far-ranging missions that include peacekeeping, high seas anti-piracy patrols, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, Pentagon analysts say.

But China's continuing lack of openness about its growing military capabilities and intentions raises questions that could lead to misunderstandings and regional instability, the analysts said at a Pentagon briefing.

The U.S. Defense Department released its congressionally mandated annual assessment of China's military (PDF, 4.8MB) August 16. It includes details on Beijing's improvements in land-based missiles, nuclear forces and its expanding fleet of attack submarines.

China's military modernization is supported by a

continued increase in government funding, a senior defense official said. Beijing announced on March 4 a 7.5 percent increase in its military budget to approximately \$78.6 billion, continuing more than two decades of sustained increases in its announced military budget. A significant portion of its annual military expenditures, however, remains classified.

Pentagon analysts estimate that China's total military-related spending for 2009 stands at approximately \$150 billion, senior defense officials said. By comparison, the 2010 U.S. defense budget, signed by President Obama on October 28, 2009, was \$680 billion.

Senior defense officials, who gave a Pentagon background briefing on the report, said the relationship between the United States and China is complex and has elements of cooperation, competition, opportunities and challenges. China broke off military-to-military relations with the Pentagon this year after the United States announced the sale of more than \$6.4 billion in defensive weapons and equipment to Taiwan.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said at a security conference in Singapore in June that the arms sales to Taiwan are part of a long-standing U.S. practice. He said it is unfortunate that China and the United States have not been able to develop a "sustained and reliable" relationship in military-to-military affairs.

A senior defense official said, "The result of this Chinese decision was the perpetuation of an on-again, off-again cycle in our military-to-military relationship, a cycle that we see as limiting the extent to which we can explore areas of cooperation, but also — and perhaps even more troubling given China's increasing military capabilities — a cycle that increases the risk that miscommunication and misperception could lead to miscalculation."

The report states that the Chinese military remains focused on preparing for a Taiwan contingency, the defense officials said. "In addition, the [People's Liberation Army] is also developing the capability to attack at long ranges military forces that might deploy or operate within the Western Pacific," an official said.

"China's ability to sustain military power at a distance, however, remains somewhat limited today," the official said.

CHINESE MILITARY OPENNESS

A recent study by two analysts (PDF, 612KB) at the Washington-based National Defense University attempted to assess Chinese military openness, citing a culture of secrecy has often surrounded China's military modernization programs. Their research has found that

over time there has been a gradual effort at more openness through China's defense white papers.

China's degree of openness is comparable to that of some Southeast Asian countries and to India, but significantly less than Asia-Pacific democracies such as Japan and South Korea, the authors said.

"Misperceptions about military capabilities and intentions can heighten the intensity of security dilemma dynamics and raise military tensions," Michael Kiselycznyk and Phillip Saunders wrote in their June 2010 study, *Assessing Chinese Military Transparency*.

"Greater transparency about military capabilities and intentions can therefore be an important tool in building confidence and reducing unwarranted security concerns," they wrote.

New Horizons: U.S. Military's Humanitarian Efforts in Haiti

By Jessika Macias and Frank Rosa
Staff Writers

Washington — Seven months after a magnitude 7.0 earthquake severely damaged Haiti's capital city, Port-au-Prince, and the surrounding area, the need to rebuild the island nation continues.

The U.S. military, which provided rapid support in the earthquake's immediate aftermath, is now supporting the reconstruction process through medical and engineering projects in a military exercise called "New Horizons." Units from the Louisiana Army National Guard are providing humanitarian services to Haitians in an exercise that aims to continue U.S. military help for Haiti following the seven months of actions to support earthquake relief.

More than 2 million people were displaced by the January 12 earthquake and its aftershocks, and approximately 1.5 million still remain in relief camps. The earthquake destroyed or paralyzed the island nation's center of government, commerce and culture, and killed about 230,000 of its citizens.

"The New Horizons mission shows the commitment between the United States and the people of Haiti," said David Lindwall, the U.S. Embassy's deputy chief of mission in Haiti. The international collaboration with the Task Force Kout Men effort also reflects how many helping hands are committed to the recovery of Haiti.

NEW HORIZONS

New Horizons is a U.S. Southern Command-led international humanitarian effort that began in June and

continues through September. The exercise involves about 550 troops operating as Task Force Kout Men, which means "helping hands" in Creole, reflecting the spirit that the Army National Guard feels for the Haitian people.

The task force commander, Colonel Michael Borrel, says it is a pleasure to give back. "So many from the U.S. and the international community came to Louisiana's aid following hurricanes Katrina and Rita that it makes me proud as a U.S. military officer to come here to do something for the Haitian people," he said.

Throughout the duration of the exercise, Task Force Kout Men will be assisted by other National Guard units from Arkansas, Oregon, the Virgin Islands, Montana, Missouri, Texas, South Dakota and Indiana. The task force will also be supported by U.S. Navy, Air Force and Army personnel. In the United States, National Guard personnel are part of the nation's reserve military forces.

The exercise is also a multinational effort. Taking part are troops from the Belize Defense Force, who live and work with U.S. forces and support the engineering effort. Members of the Argentine military, who support the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), are providing much of the external security.

The Haitian government designated the area around Gonaives as the project site for New Horizons. Gonaives is the sixth-largest city in Haiti, and is located about 110 kilometers north of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Assistance is needed outside of Port-au-Prince to help regions that absorbed the people who left the capital. It is estimated that between 50,000 and 100,000 displaced people migrated to the area around Gonaives, placing a strain on the area's limited resources.

With an estimated 20,000 displaced children, one major aspect of the mission is to help build and repair local schools.

Engineers will be working on four separate sites. Projects include the construction of two new three-classroom buildings at the Lycée Louis Diaquoi, a three-classroom school in Mandrin, a new two-classroom school, Ecole Nationale K. Georges, and the reconstruction of two schools in Desronvilles.

Latrines will be built along with the schools, and water-well enhancements at all the sites will provide the students and faculty with access to water through hand pumps. The well projects are being worked on in collaboration with the U.S. Navy.

Borrel said the schools are built with reinforced concrete.

This makes them more resistant to earthquakes and hurricanes.

U.S. military health care professionals are providing medical care to Haitians. Medical services include primary care by family-practice providers, pediatricians, internists and women's health providers. Dentists and optometrists are providing dental treatment and eye services.

During the first three weeks of the exercise, more than 12,000 patients were treated in Saint Marc, L'Estere and Poteau.

Also taking part in the mission is the Navy amphibious ship USS Iwo Jima, which visited the Port-de-Paix area in July. The ship's crew included military and civilian medical professionals who provided health care to thousands of Haitians.

Muslim American Spends Week on Street for Ramadan

Yusef Ramelize leaves the comforts of home to help New York's homeless

By M. Scott Bortot
Staff Writer

Washington — For Ramadan, New York City resident Yusef Ramelize will fast, pray and give alms to the poor. But how he helps the needy during the holy month sets him apart from other Muslims in America, or anywhere else.

Ramelize is spending part of Ramadan living on the street. For him, this is the perfect way to draw attention to his city's growing homeless population.

For the second year in a row, Ramelize is helping New Yorkers in need with his Homeless for One Week project. Ramelize first lived on the street for a week in 2009 after it became clear that people needed to understand homelessness.

"I asked myself, 'What can I do to raise awareness?' and then I decided that I was going to go homeless for a day," Ramelize said. "But then I said, 'You know what? I want to make the biggest sacrifice that I can' and I decided to come up with the idea of going homeless for a week."

Ramelize, a production manager at an information services company, makes good use of his time on the street. Through his website, HomelessforOneWeek.com, Ramelize aims to raise \$5,000 for the Food Bank for New York City. In March 2009, he brought in more than \$3,000 for New York's Coalition for the Homeless.

Mary Brosnahan, executive director for the Coalition for

the Homeless, praised Ramelize's efforts.

"It's so easy to become inured to the suffering of homeless people on our streets. Everyone at the coalition is in awe of Yusef's empathy as well as his courage in bedding down in New York to bring attention back to this crisis," Brosnahan said. "We have record homelessness in New York City, and Ramelize has taken that extra step, to go outside everyone's daily comfort zone, to draw much-needed attention to the suffering on our streets."

Tough economic times are exacerbating the city's homeless crisis. According to the Coalition for the Homeless, 120,000 men, women and children entered New York's shelter system in 2009. The Food Bank of New York, which Ramelize is currently helping, provides food and services to 1.5 million New Yorkers.

For last year's homeless project, Ramelize dealt with cold, snowy weather, which forced him to sleep on the city's subway system. For this year, Ramelize is spending August 15-21 in Manhattan's Union Square Park because the weather is warmer.

Choosing to hold the Homeless for One Week project during Ramadan is no accident. Originally from Trinidad and Tobago, Ramelize is looking forward to fasting on the street for spiritual reasons.

"This is a really sacred month. I couldn't think of a better way to give back," he said. "It brings up so much emotion because I love Ramadan and what it stands for."

At the end of every day, Ramelize is breaking his fast at the Islamic Center at New York University. During Ramadan, the center is hosting free iftars for the community.

During the week, Ramelize records his meetings with the homeless using a video camera and places them online. The video interviews humanize the homeless by transforming them from nameless faces into people with histories.

"A lot of people ignore the homeless and a lot of times they just want someone to talk to, that's really what it boils down to," Ramelize said. "From the interactions that I had, I just had really great conversations with them."

Carol Schneider, spokeswoman for the Food Bank for New York City, said Ramelize's efforts will help feed thousands.

"One dollar donated to the Food Bank will provide five nutritious meals," Schneider said. If Ramelize meets his fundraising goal of \$5,000, he will provide meals for more than 20,000 people.

Many of the 1,000 agencies the Food Bank works with are seeing many more people coming to them for the first time. According to the latest figures, New York City is faced with an unemployment rate of more than 9 percent. This number does not take into account people who no longer are eligible for unemployment benefits or who work part-time jobs.

The Food Bank has a community kitchen and pantry in West Harlem, where last year it served 520,000 meals.

"The director is always saying that he suddenly sees a lot of people coming to him and they are wearing suits," Schneider said of the Harlem kitchen. "And somebody had stopped him one day, he was in line and wearing a suit, and he said, 'Tell me how to do this; I've never done this before.'"

It is stories like this that are spurring Ramelize to action. Already, he is thinking about what he can do next year.

"My plan is to expand, definitely," he said. "Because the more I expand, the more I can raise awareness and just kind of educate people about it."

Prison Sentence for Baha'is Prompts Condemnation of Iran

U.S. and other nations denounce move as religious persecution

By Jeff Baron
Staff Writer

Washington — Seven leaders of the Baha'i faith in Iran have begun 20-year sentences at Gohardasht Prison near Tehran in a case that has drawn condemnation from the United States, the Netherlands, Great Britain and other nations.

"The United States is deeply concerned with the Iranian government's continued persecution of Baha'is and other religious minority communities in Iran," U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in a statement August 12.

"The United States is committed to defending religious freedom around the world, and we have not forgotten the Baha'i community in Iran," Clinton said.

The five men and two women whose sentences became public this week, members of a committee that responds to the needs of Iranian Baha'is, were arrested by the Iranian government in spring 2008 and tried in a series of court sessions between January and June of this year. The charges against them included espionage, propaganda activities against the Islamic government and the establishment of an illegal administration.

The Baha'i faith began in Iran in the 19th century, and

despite persecution by the Islamic government installed after the 1979 revolution, Baha'is are the largest non-Muslim religious group in the country, with more than 300,000 adherents in a nation of about 67 million.

"It's been a very deliberate, systematic policy of the Iranian government" to stop the Baha'i faith in Iran, said Shastri Purushotma, human rights officer for the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, the faith's national organization.

Reports of other anti-Baha'i actions in Iran in the past two months include the bulldozing of Baha'i cemeteries in three provinces and the destruction of 50 Baha'i homes in a town in a fourth province. Baha'is also are generally denied access to higher education.

Baha'is faced persecution under previous Iranian governments, but "especially since the revolution in 1979, things have been very bad," Purushotma said. The first three seven-member national committees of Baha'i leaders after the 1979 revolution were executed, as were about 200 other members of the Baha'i community.

Iran has accused Baha'i leaders of being in league with the government of Israel, the location of the faith's holiest site and international headquarters in Haifa, where Baha'i's founder lived in exile and is buried. The Baha'i deny the Iranian government's claims.

"This whole thing about spying for Israel: Before Israel, it was something else. It was the British. Before the British, it was the Russians. So, it's always been scapegoated in some way," Purushotma said. "They can't justify plain, out-and-out religious persecution, so they need to make up some other excuse, and this is what they've come up with."

Lawyers for the seven Baha'i leaders plan to file an appeal of the verdicts and prison sentences.

Iran is one of 11 "countries of particular concern" designated by the U.S. State Department for violations of religious freedom. According to the Iran portion of the State Department's International Religious Freedom Report 2009, "Baha'i religious groups reported arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention, expulsions from universities, and confiscation of property. Government-controlled broadcast and print media intensified negative campaigns against religious minorities, particularly the Baha'is."

Leonard Leo, chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, called the new sentences "an outrageous miscarriage of justice and one more example of how the Iranian regime is a gross violator of human rights and religious freedoms."

Leo's statement added, "The prosecutions and sentences are, pure and simple, politically and religiously motivated acts, and the Commission calls for the unconditional release of these seven individuals."

The sentences imposed on the seven Baha'i leaders have evoked a chorus of condemnation. A declaration August 12 by Catherine Ashton, the European Union's high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, says the verdict "appears to be based on the defendants belonging to a religious minority" and that "the judicial process was seriously flawed, respecting neither Iran's international commitments under the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) nor its national legislation regarding fair trial rights."

"It is shocking that these people have been convicted for their beliefs, as would appear to be the case," said Maxime Verhagen, foreign minister of the Netherlands, in a statement. "I call on the Iranian authorities to respect their international commitments on human rights. The Baha'i leaders have the right to a fair trial and should be released as soon as possible."

Similar statements came from an array of countries and such organizations as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Purushotma said he cannot judge whether Iranian officials will be swayed by the international outcry, but he said they have in the past. After the bloodshed in the first few years of the 1979 Iranian revolution, he said, United Nations resolutions and comments by then-President Ronald Reagan, among others, helped bring "a sharp decrease in the number of executions" of Baha'is in Iran, adding that from 1988 onward, the pace of executions slowed. "It was just every two years, there would be one or two Baha'is executed," Purushotma said. "So clearly that's an indication that the international outpouring of support did have an effect."

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